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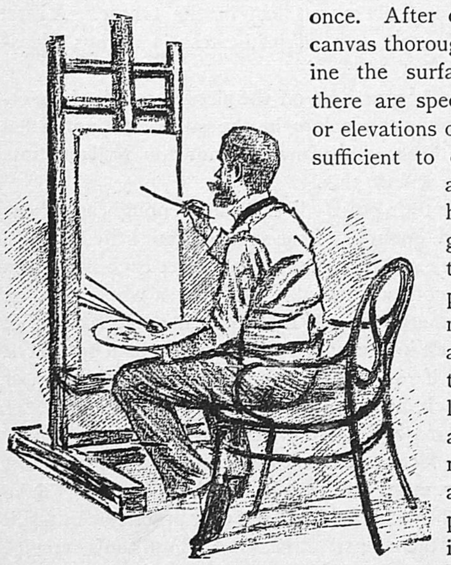
PORTRAITURE IN OILS.

III.—THE SECOND AND THIRD PAINTINGS.



WHEN the portrait is so dry that there is no "tack" to the surface, it is ready for the second painting. The sitter is not needed at once. After dusting the canvas thoroughly, examine the surface, and if there are specks, grains, or elevations of any kind sufficient to catch light and mar the harmonious gradation of tone, lay the palette-knife nearly flat and scrape them off. As long as you are careful not to gouge at all, this process will improve the texture. Be sure to stop in time, however; getting rid of blemish does not mean making smooth; that would be entirely wrong. The next thing is to oil the surface thoroughly with poppy oil, using a large bristle brush; then, with a large soft cotton rag, wipe off all superfluous oil. This will renew the freshness of the transparent colors that have dried dull, and make the colors of the second painting unite more kindly with those of the first.

The background, which has had but a thin painting, may now be laid in carefully with a set of mixed tints. Its prevailing tone should be kept lighter than the darkest tones in the portrait, and darker than the lightest. If it is to be cold and bluish for a fair subject, use the same combinations of color that were used for the half tints on the face, with deeper shades, composed of terre verte, raw umber, and black, for the lower part of the canvas. If the drapery should be white or very light, do not bring these darker colors immediately around it unless it is lost in deep shadow. If the subject is dark, you may use colors similar to the warmest shadows on the flesh; even rosy tones may be employed and allowed to deepen into brown madder and black as the lower part of the canvas is approached. Paint with a large flat bristle brush, making a short, vigorous stroke. Where juxtaposition and outline are involved, some degree of contrast is wanted for relief, but too much destroys harmony. Where the background is brought up to meet the contour of the head and figure, be very careful not to leave a hard line and thereby give an inlaid effect. No matter if you blur the contour a little, it is easily restored in the second painting, and will round out the better for it.

When the background is satisfactorily finished, you are ready for the sitter again. If it is not the same day, a little more poppy oil must be passed over the dry part of the surface. The palette may be set precisely as it was for the first painting, except that more white may be put in the lightest flesh tint. Have the light and everything arranged as it was for the first painting, and get the sitter in the same attitude, body and mind—if possible.

As the warm undertones of the face are all secured, there is now less danger of using the local flesh tints too freely. Begin, however, with the warm shadows again; but you may reduce them by adding tints from the first row prepared, to give the exact tone of the complexion as seen under the existing conditions. Of course the shadows must be preserved, and not destroyed with opaque color; but the texture may be made more flesh-like by bringing in local color.

When you come to the cool half tones, you may again borrow discriminately from the first row of tints; and, as the actual flesh tints are applied, give them all the life-like texture possible. It is much easier to do this now than when first working on the bare canvas. Next, use the very lightest tint where the light comes strong on the flesh; on the forehead, it will probably be broad, on the nose, fine and sharp, touching, perhaps, in the middle and again near the end; then, on the chin, rather broad and soft again, with less strength. Bring the pearly half tints against these lights as you see them in studying your model. In a very subtle way do these pearly tones bring themselves in to modify the more positive lights and shades. They are extremely elusive, and it is only by careful observation that you will get a correct perception of them.

As you bring the color around the mouth, you will see where the lips may be touched to advantage. They will need more or less softening and toning with flesh tint and rose madder. Do not leave the line of the mouth hard and distinct, even if it is ever so firm in its expression. You will probably find the mouth more difficult than any other feature. It is the most changeful, and the least likely to look natural when in repose. Much depends upon the touches of shade around it, at the corners, below the under lip, and upon the upper lip. Anything that tends to give the latter length and convexity, makes the expression more stern; while curling it, and shortening it, gives a gentle, or, perhaps, a pathetic expression. It was an observing person who invented that very old saying, "Keep a stiff upper lip," which meant, keep a determined spirit. Very clearly do the delicate, facile muscles of the upper lip indicate the spirit of the possessor. It is the emotional part of the character that shows itself most in the mouth, while the purely intellectual is expressed by the eyes. Have not the eyes been called "the windows of the soul?" It is not difficult to modify the expression of the eyes when they are once laid in faithfully; if the first painting is really good it is not necessary to go entirely over them again, but only to soften here, and strengthen there. Increasing the high lights on the eyes gives vivacity, perhaps sharpness, of expression; while subduing them, and deepening shadows, gives dreaminess, or, it may be, dullness, if carried too far.

Treat the outlines of the features with great care, rounding and softening them; at the same time, be sure that you do not sacrifice truthfulness in striving for excellence of finish.

Repaint the ears and the neck, as you did the face; they are susceptible of the same improvement.

The amount of repainting that the hair requires, depends upon the success of the first painting. Of course the contour of the head must be perfected by bringing the hair a little on the finished background. Also, where the hair comes upon the face and neck that have been repainted, it must be reproduced with light, soft touches. Do not be afraid to bring the hair right on fresh paint; it will be the softer and prettier for it, provided you can do justice to it without much manipulation. If the principal masses of hair were laid in naturally and effectively the first time, it is best to let them alone; sometimes a few strokes of the brush may have produced such a happy result that one does not want to risk any modification. The half tints and the lights may need strengthening or toning, while the shadows are satisfactory. In deciding as to what is needed, be sure to take far-off views; close peering is altogether futile.

When there is a beard to be painted, follow the instructions given for painting the hair. Of course, in either case, the treatment must be adapted to the particular style or kind. The beard is much coarser than the hair, and sometimes quite different in tone; touch and color must be varied accordingly.

Regarding drapery, general instructions have already been given. When anything dark or highly colored comes near the face, it is best to paint it in quite early, that you may see the flesh tones in relation to it. A white collar must be much subdued with shade. If there is a broader or stronger light on it than you want, allow less. If compromise is ever justifiable, it is in dealing with hard, opaque white.

A black coat or dress must have Vandyck brown in the deepest shades, especially where there is actual indentation.

Silks and satins require very decisive angular lights and a free use of cool half tints. Velvets have broad soft lights and deeply shaded folds.

Lace needs a mere film of color over the finished undertint, except where the design shows opaque markings; these, where the light strikes them, may be made more or less sharp, to suit the kind of lace to be imitated. This applies equally to white lace and black. Where folds or plaitings give many thicknesses, of course there is also some opacity. All transparent material is treated in a similar manner.

As the first portrait is expected to take in the bust only, no mention has been made of the hands. When these important members are painted, see that you put honest work on them. The hands should not be slighted any more than the face. Sometimes they go very far to express character; sometimes they are very beautiful; in any case, they demand faithful, consistent treatment. First, let them be correctly drawn. If any foreshortening is required, be particularly careful. Assuming that the drawing is perfect and that there are no ugly black lines left between the fingers or anywhere, you may take the same rosy tint that was used for the nostrils and ears, and lay it in between the fingers and wherever there is any glimpse of the inside of the hand. Of course this does not apply to a full view of a palm, only to a partly-closed hand. After this mix a set of tints as for the face, and begin to paint in the shades first, and so on to the lightest flesh tint. All the warm tones of the hands should be rather rosy than yellow or brown, and the cool half tints may be used freely. On fair, delicate hands, these should be very pearl-like.

When bare arms are to be painted, model them as carefully as you do the features of the face. Keep strong lights as well as dark shades somewhat within the outlines, that you may have roundness of surface. In the first and in the second painting, give all the consideration to texture that you gave in painting the face. To do justice to a muscular arm, one must have some knowledge of superficial anatomy. Indeed, the sooner the study is taken up the better.

When the second painting is finished and has had time to dry, it is to be oiled with poppy oil as before, to be ready for the so-called third painting. This should, however, be no more than a final touching up; that is, if the previous work has been really satisfactory. You may have thought that you were doing all that you could do in the second painting. Nevertheless, you will find that the time has just come for you to perfect the work. There is no general painting of surface to do; you have only to view critically, and touch where you will, to strengthen, or subdue, or tone, as the case may be. Where you use transparent color, it may be very thin, a mere glaze, and but few tints need be mixed. A tone may be modified with any appropriate color, thinned with linseed oil. Black, neutral, or gray, may be used with impunity now that the warm undertones are effectually secured. Some use these cold colors freely in the earliest stages of the work. If the purpose is to produce ashy pallor, it is the right way; but, by using warm and more transparent colors first, you can, in the second and third paintings, employ cool tones that will give delicacy without pallor. A little rose tint may be made to steal over the cheeks if they will bear it. Light flesh tones will not be needed except for slight touches. If there is anything like a hard line to be seen soften it. You may carry little diagonal strokes across an outline and make it appear broader and softer.

Study the eyes: stand well back and compare them with those of the sitter. See if the lashes will bear bringing out a little more, and if the shadows are harmoniously toned. On work that is about finished, the slightest touch of color is very telling.

It will be well if, before the surface is dry, you can suspend work, and then come upon the portrait afresh to see if it impresses you in the same way as before, or if anything further is suggested. Try to accomplish all that you are, at this stage of practice, equal to, but no more. A touch too many means retrogression.

All oil paintings should be left several months, at least, after being finished, before any permanent varnish is put on them, and then there should be just enough to keep the dark, transparent colors looking fresh, and not enough to give a varnished appearance—that would cheapen and ruin any picture.

Soehnée's French retouching varnish is good; but, for a more lasting varnish, use the best mastic. It should be thin—like water, and not like syrup. Spirits of turpentine may be used to thin it, if necessary. Use a broad bristle varnishing brush, passing it regularly over the canvas without touching any part more than once. Be sure that there is not enough left anywhere on the surface to run and form drops. Hold the canvas obliquely and view it with the light striking across it, to see that no places are missed or over-charged. Leave it to dry in a rather warm, clear air, away from sun, wind, and dust.

If your work is liked by competent and impartial critics you may feel much encouraged. It will be long before your technique will be faultless, especially if you have to work alone; but whatever talent you develop, whatever skill you acquire, will be like capital in hand, ready for future enterprise. H. S. SAKING.

THE words "hand-painted" are always expected to enhance the commercial value of fancy articles offered for sale. As a rule, the rejoinder of the purchaser might be, "If these are 'hand-painted,' I will take something that is not." When allured by the bewildering displays in some of our poorly-lighted shops it is well to cultivate a righteous aversion to trash.

Amateur Photography.

CONDUCTED BY GEORGE G. ROCKWOOD.

Backgrounds in Portraiture.—A correspondent writes: "What would be the best general background for portraits? I have no room to store a number of canvases of different shades." Although I have, probably, over forty backgrounds and combinations, one suffices for nine tenths of my portrait-heads. The ground is 5x7 feet, of a light cool gray color painted in distemper, and, of course, perfectly "flat." Oil colors would be desirable if it were not for the gloss or reflections which they give out in certain lights. Flannel sheeting dyed a pale gray is excellent and does not dent like the distemper-printed ground. It is, of course, put on a stretcher which hangs on pivots—precisely like the dressing-mirrors in use. By this means one is enabled to change the tone of the background to any degree desired by simply tipping the ground forward or back. If pushed back at the top to an angle of, say, 25 or 30° the result is almost white; when reversed, of course, the ground goes into shadow and the result is a dark ground. With a swinging leaf or side-screen hinged to the upright sides of the frame the ground can be made still darker. It will be readily seen that every possible grade can thus be produced and an atmosphere produced about the head which would be difficult to obtain otherwise. Ordinarily I place my sitter in the light which I consider best for likeness and artistic effect, then secure the desired contrast of background by swinging or tipping the screen to the proper degree. In this study of backgrounds or relief I can quite appreciate the point of the old story concerning Sir Thomas Lawrence, which, in effect, was that the father of a young art student sought a position for him in the studio of the great painter, declaring that he might earn his salt, perhaps, by painting in backgrounds. Sir Thomas replied that he who could paint his backgrounds would be able to finish the pictures. The photographic fraternity, I think, is much indebted to Mr. Sarony for first emphasizing the great value of strong lighting and effective contrasts in backgrounds and sitters.

An Inexpensive Method of Proving Negatives by those who have limited, or no means, of printing, is to make transparencies from them. Simple as is this process of printing by contact, I find that some of our amateur friends are not succeeding as well as one might expect. The transparencies may be made the same size as the negatives, or they may be larger or smaller. An ordinary printing-press the size of the negative is desirable, although not essential. A series of black paper mats with various-sized, and different-shaped, openings should be provided. The material used for them is usually known as "needle" paper. It is thin, smooth, and opaque enough to protect the margins of the plate. For portraits, an oval shape is best; for landscapes, the square or double elliptic. After thoroughly cleaning the back of the negative, place it in the press, and then upon this adjust the opening of the mat, so as to expose the choice portion of the picture. It may be best to fasten the mat to the negative or press with sticking paper. Now place your unexposed plate face down upon the mat, and over this either black paper or dark cloth, so that no light be reflected. Be most careful that no light reaches your plate. Now, at a distance of, say, two feet, rest your press, and with your watch in hand open the door of the dark-room lantern. The exposure, of course, will depend upon the density of the negative and the power of the light. In my own practice I use the *same distance* and *same light* for all negatives, so that I may have a standard, and vary the time of exposure with the density of the negatives. At the distance named, and with a four-foot burner, a reasonable margin is given for timing the picture, which, with a good, bright negative requires about ten seconds. Nothing will take the place of experience in timing, so one must make some experiments before feeling certain about exposures. But there is quite as much lee-way in developing transparencies as in negatives, and the same methods used in negative development will give good results with positives. Of course the best color is obtained with oxalate, and the solution of bromide should be used if there is the least indication of over-exposure. The development should not be carried to the extent that negatives are: simply till the lights are well covered. Fixing and washing should be done with the same care as with negatives. If enlargements or reductions are wanted, a long cone or box should be provided, into which your camera will slide. Say, for instance, that the camera-box is 8x8 on the outside. Provide a plain wooden tube 9x9 on the inside, and, say, twenty-four inches long. One end, of course, is open, and the other end is arranged with adjustable apertures the size of the negative to be copied. Brass springs or "fingers" will hold the latter in place. Having adjusted the negative turn it toward a clear, uninterrupted light—northern sky light preferred—and run the camera into the dark tube until the image on the ground glass is the size required; then focus, expose and develop in the usual manner. If the camera has sufficient bellows length the image, of course, may be enlarged if so desired. I have often reproduced card and cabinet negatives in this manner to nearly life size with excellent results. In the case of small transparencies suitable frames can be had of the stock dealers; or, failing these, a sheet of glass of the size of the picture may be covered with ground glass varnish—a formula for which has been published in these columns—and placed face to face with the transparency and bound with sticking paper. Amateurs will find this an admirable method of proving their negatives, and, after all, it is not much more expensive than getting the prints made; and then one has the satisfaction of assuring one's frlends that "I did it!"

Painting on Bromide Paper.—An artist friend asks how to prepare the bromide paper for painting on it in oil colors. The vehicle for holding the sensitive compound on the paper is an emulsion of gelatine, and this, of course, is a "size" itself—so, I have found that where the image well covered the strainer the paint would "bear out" without any preparation. But it is safest to apply to the surface a sizing of good clear glue or gelatine, being careful to put it on very smoothly and *not too hot* as it might dissolve away the picture. Of course the picture should be mounted on good strong muslin. I find that sold as "nightgown" muslin is best for the purpose; it has large, smooth threads and gives the effect of canvas.

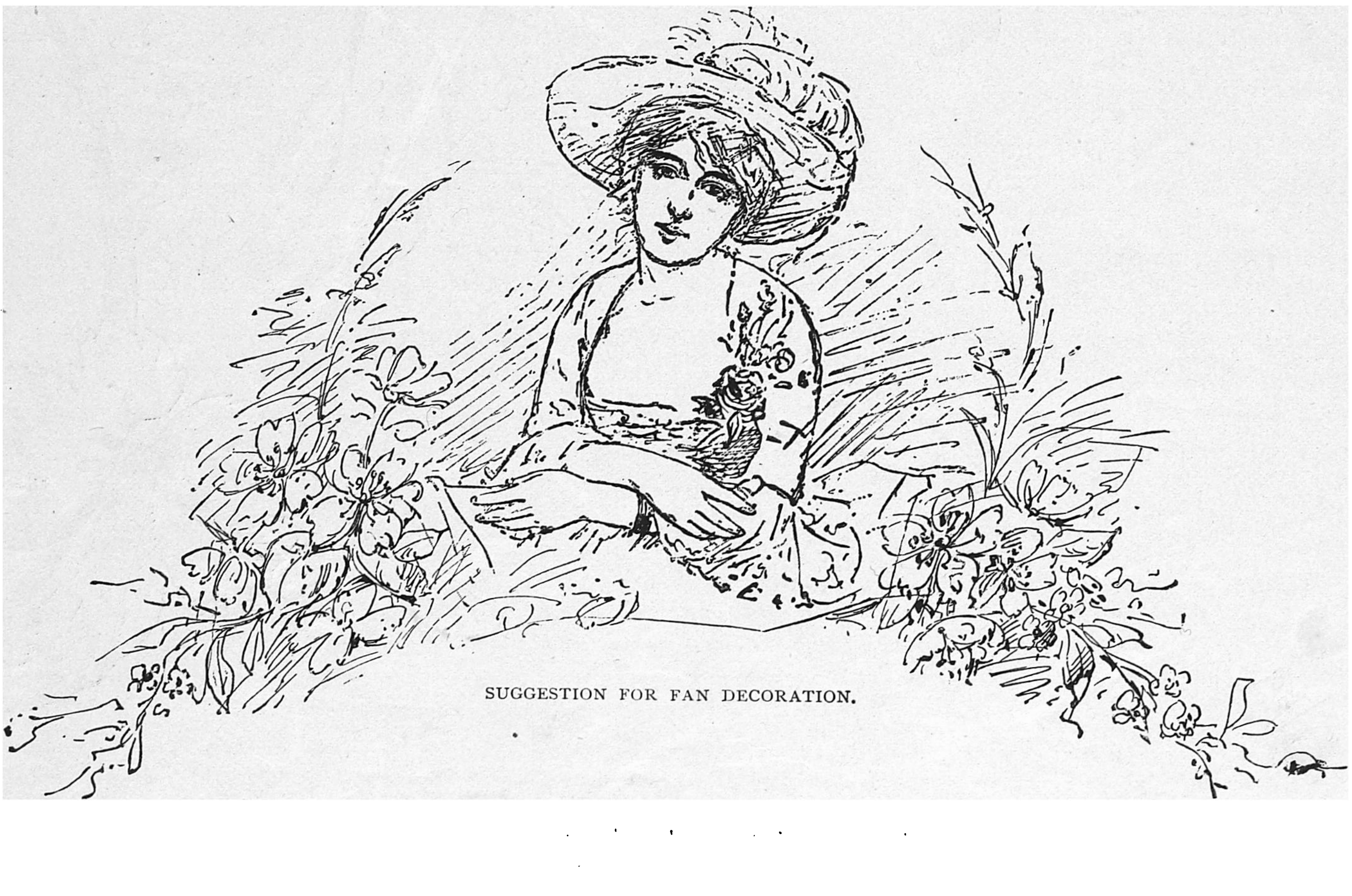
Removing Photographs from Mounts.—"A traveller" wishes to remove the photographs gathered in foreign lands from their mounts and paste them in scrap-books. Let him carefully split the mounts, and remove from the backs all that is possible without injury to the picture; then place them in a pan of hot water and be *patient!* In a few minutes most of the photographs will lift easily from the mounts, while others will require a second or third Turkish bath before leaving the cardboard. Do not undertake to remount carbon prints as the hot water will be likely to dissolve away the picture entirely!

Stereoscopic Pictures with One Lens.—Nothing is more simple than making a stereoscopic picture with one lens if the objects before the lens can remain in position. Say with a 5x4 lens, box and plate you make an exposure. Have your box so that you can slide or move it directly to the right or left, but exactly in horizontal line, two and five eighths inches—never more than three inches—and make on another plate the same picture with the same exposure. Be sure that there is the same extent of picture in each. For instance, you may have a landscape with a tree or any other object, which is half an inch from the left side of the picture; in the second exposure see to it that the tree or object occupies the same relative position on the ground glass. After development and printing, the pictures must be *reversed* in mounting, the centres not to exceed two and five eighths of an inch apart. If the latter distance is exceeded there will be a painful effect upon the eyes, and a distortion in the picture. I mean by "centres," of course, the distance from any given line or object in one picture to the same object in the other.

Defectively Mounted Lenses.—Speaking of this matter of distance between centres in mounting and of the difference in the sizes of the photographs, I feel confident that the marvellous pictures of the stereoscope have fallen into disuse more from this tendency to exaggeration, than from any other cause. Even the lens-makers have overlooked the fault. Recently, upon applying to Dallmeyer, in London, for a set of portrait stereoscopic lenses, he furnished them to me on flanges which brought the centres of the tubes full four inches apart. I called his attention to the defect and he admitted it, but it was too late to alter them before my sailing. I tried the lenses, as he had mounted them, and the results were curious, to say the least. A child's head presented a chin not less than one foot long; and other features were proportionately exaggerated. I removed or cut down the flanges until the distance between the centres was that of the ordinary distance between the pupils of the human eye, and, after that, the pictures no longer showed distortions.

Three in One.—It is not generally known by photographers that all of the double combination lenses of the best manufacture can be transformed into three separate lenses of varying focus and power—first, the regular combination; then each of the single lenses separately. There is usually a difference in focus between the front and the back lens, so, when adjusted—always in the *back* end of the tube—the image varies in size. If the two lenses vary in diameter, the tube must be altered so that each will screw in, or a special brass work is procured for the non-fitting lens. In using either of the components as a single lens the stop should be placed in front, or next to the concave side of the glass. Of course the *front* lens when so used should be reversed; that is, the convex side to the plate, and the concave or plane side to the object. The single lens will not give good definition with so large an aperture to the stop as in the complete combination. The successful experiment has been made of combining the front lens of a short focus combination, say four-inch equivalent focus, with the back lens of a nine-inch, securing a result of about six or seven-inch focus. In such a case the stop should be placed nearest to the short focused lens.

As to the Permanence of Platinum Prints.—An admirer of the beautiful prints made by the platinum process, asks if they are permanent. This is a question somewhat difficult to answer, for while, theoretically and "officially," the platinum picture is declared to be unalterable, my experience is to the contrary. I was the first "licensee" of the process in America, and was delighted at the charming results obtained by its use; but all of my pictures have proved first or last unstable—all turning a yellow or dingy red. Possibly, with great care, small pictures may, in limited quantities, be so treated as to be made permanent; but I fear that large prints are too unstable to be used for portraits to be finished in crayon. My present belief is that a *developed print*, by the silver process, is the most permanent form of all photographic prints aside from the carbon or pigment printing processes. I have a number of developed prints, made twenty years ago, which have been exposed to all sorts of atmospheric changes and yet give no sign of fading orchanging.



SUGGESTION FOR FAN DECORATION.